

**Decision Makers:
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In the Republican-controlled House, Waxman at first seems to be something of a dinosaur. But Waxman, who was elected to Congress in 1974, has not lost his passion or his role as champion of liberal causes.

On health and environmental issues, Waxman, 57, has long been recognized as an effective and leading advocate of tougher government regulations. His influence on these issues is enhanced by the 16 years he spent as chairman of the old Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health and the Environment.

He sponsored landmark environmental legislation such as the 1990 Clean Air Act. More recently, he helped ensure that strong environmental safeguards were included in the 1996 Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments and the 1996 Food Quality Act. Waxman has also worked to expand Medicare and Medicaid services and was a key sponsor of the 1996 Ryan White Care Act Amendments that increased spending for AIDS research. Over the years, he has also fought for the 1990 Nutrition Labeling and Education Act, the Breast and Cervical Cancer Mortality Act, the Safe Medical Devices Act and the Orphan Drug Act.

Waxman has been a key supporter of President Clinton's attempts to give the Food and Drug Administration the authority to regulate tobacco in an effort to curb smoking by teenagers. In 1994, Waxman conducted highly publicized hearings on the tobacco industry. At those hearings, seven chief executive officers testified that they did not believe cigarette smoking was addictive or that it caused cancer. That testimony is being scrutinized by the Justice Department as part of a probe into allegations of potential criminal liability by tobacco executives, including allegations of perjury before Congress.

The elderly have been another Waxman priority. He has supported programs to improve long-term nursing care, as well as housing and nutrition for the aged. Waxman has fought efforts to reduce Social Security benefits and to raise the retirement age.

As the senior Democrat on the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee, Waxman has recently taken an active role in trying to make sure that the panel's hearings on campaign finance abuses look into both parties' campaign activities in 1996. He has written several letters to committee chairman Dan Burton, R-Ind., that criticize him for unilaterally adopting certain procedures. At the same time, Waxman has urged Attorney General Janet Reno to appoint an independent counsel to examine the allegations of campaign finance abuses by the Clinton campaign.

Waxman's admirers note that he's been an influential advocate both inside and outside Congress. "His effectiveness is not only in being a tough negotiator with Republicans as well as other Democrats," said David Cohen, a co-director of the liberal Advocacy Group, which trains public-interest advocates. "But he's also an organizer who's willing to go public on government reform and health care issues."